1989

FLAMES IN THE NIGHT

Kenneth Anger interviewed by Rebekah Wood

You're back in Hollywood again. Is that home?

I really feel like a gypsy. I don't identify. I suppose it is. Certainly I was born here, but I can feel at home in Paris or London. This is a funny place. I've come back hoping perhaps to make a commercial movie. It's a big 'perhaps'.

Your apartment houses your collection of Hollywood memorabilia. Have you been saving things for long?

Yes. I began at five, when my grandmother gave me some buttons which belonged to Rudolph Valentino. My collection has mostly been in storage in the attics and basements of friends' houses and it's only recently that I've been able to gather everything together. I have about half of it here.

I notice you can collect Kenneth Anger films on video now.

A test was made and they look good on video. The fact is many more people are able to purchase them than have ever been able to collect 16mm prints of my films. It isn't the same as seeing them on a screen . That's how I prefer them to be seen, but I accept it and I also gladly accept an additional way to increase my revenue. I don't exist in an ivory tower like some gay nineties aesthete. I'm not panicking , but I have to think about that. 'Nothing gets easier', as Bette Davis once said about growing old.

It is very sealed from the outside world in here.

Well, I hope so, while the outside is the physical town - Hollywood. Hollywood is not what it used to be - where is? It's become in many ways a third world shanty-town; of course the stars live in Bel-Air and Malibu.

Starting at the beginning: A Midsummer Night's Dream - *that fantasy film world - do you think it turned a boy's head to be doing something like that, at four?*

No. It was made very clear to me I was going to have a tiny part in one film, there was never any question about becoming a child actor as a career.

You didn't want to?

Yes. But my parents didn't want me to. It was a curious little experience. I got the part because my grandmother knew Max Rheinhardt, but also I had been going to the Theodore Kosloff dancing school, so, I could follow directions - a certain amount of pantomime and prancing about - no talk. It was awesome and certainly marked me. I mean it was dazzling.

Mickey Rooney played Puck.

He was twelve and I was four, but oddly enough he was friendly. He noticed me. He took me on a little tour of the studios and when we came to the prop department there were sixty neon violins left over from *Gold Diggers of 1933*.

The prop man said, 'You can't have one. You'll just break it.' I said 'No. I'll look after it for ever. I will be very careful.' I've still got that neon violin, it works - it glows. It's presently on exhibit at the Museum of Moving Image in London.

When you were a child, you were making movies.

Well, I decided I wanted to make films, but on my own. I must have been seven. Our family had a 16mm wind-up Kodak cinecamera which was used on holidays, birthday parties, the usual home-movie type of thing. One year, after we'd all had a trip to Yosemite, there were a few spools of unexposed film left over and I said, 'These are going to expire; let me use them up.' So I was given permission to do that.

But your family didn't continue to encourage your cinematic enterprises?

They let me use the camera. That was already something. And I didn't break it. I was very careful. So, it developed as a kind of hobby, even though I never looked on it as any kind of a lark. I took myself quite seriously as a child. I was going to make films and put my name on them: 'A film by Kenneth Anger'.

Fireworks *must have upset your parents a bit.*

They never saw it, so they couldn't be upset. It was made when they were out of town. The places where it was shown were not where they were. *Fireworks* was shown very little in the forties - one or two showings, at Cinema 16 in New York and at the San Francisco Museum. In other words, it was treated as an underground film, which is what it was, semi-clandestine and subversive.

Your grandmother helped with Fireworks?

Bertha saw it. She thought it was 'terrific' but she was the maverick of the family. She was just a character, you know, independent-minded. She didn't discourage me from being an artist, quite the opposite. The fact I had chosen an impractical career didn't faze her. She was a painter herself. I'm afraid my father wanted me to be an aeronautical engineer like him, at Douglas Aircraft - I didn't feel I was cut out for that.

What's the particular appeal for you of Valentino as a star?

I like the stars of the silent era, there's something about the lack of a voice that makes the character of the star more mythic... and to me he had fabulous charisma. Now, he wasn't the only silent star that had sexual charisma, but he was the first one... the one that was a love-object, a boudoir boy, let's put it that way. He more than any other, was like a total turn on to me.

Fireworks *was made in 1947. That's the year that Aleister Crowley died... coincidence.? I mean were you aware of that?*

I knew about Crowley, but only just. I'd read some of his books. I knew his magical son Jack Parsons. But I didn't get to Europe until 1950.

The opening shot in Fireworks, *the dreamer in the arms of the sailor, reminds me of Fay Wray and King Kong.*

It's that kind of thing, of a beast, of the protagonist being carried away by a brute. I don't think I was consciously imitating, but certainly some of my inspiration comes from things I've observed in life; in movies, in paintings, or things I dream about. Inspiration comes from many sources.

I see you're attributed with various nationalities and birth-dates; and you changed your name. That's a very Holly-wood thing to do.

Well, that's ALL WRONG, because I haven't changed my name. Various things have been written about me which are wrong - dead wrong! I was born in 1930, and the family name is Anger, which is German for a 'meadow' or 'field'. If you look in the Berlin phone book there are pages of Angers. We Angers are a good Kraut bunch from way back.

After Fireworks *your next project was* Puce Women.

It ended up being a moment, but it was supposed to be a feature film and it used a series of stunning women denoting various times of day. There was to be Miss dawn, Miss morning, Lady noon, Dame afternoon, and Dowager evening, and so the fragment was one little bit of it, which I called *Puce Moment*.

Why Puce?

Puce is a colour, the changeable colour of a flea, and puce is the colour of her sequined gown. It was the name of a purple-green iridescent colour that was very popular in the 1920's - puce and tango were jazz age colours

OK. That's the first of your movies not completed as orginally planned, something that has been a pattern in your career. You've consistently over-reached yourself. You've been an incredibly ambitious film-maker.

And an inept producer of my own projects. I don't think I was overly ambitious, but the practical thing of finding enough money, or of not running out of money is some-thing I've run up against a number of times: money

doesn't come easily - say, by a relative dying and leaving me something. And then I end up with less than I'd hoped for, so I will eventually make a shorter film, rather than just chucking it all.

Making films - the kind you've made, looking for things which go beyond the outer mechanics of action and events ... the invisible factor - that must take real clarity of purpose.

I have a pretty clear idea of what the film will be like before I begin and all the main things I want to include in it. I try to take just the scenes I need. Not endless re-takes. I've had to pre-cut them in my mind. I've also done the obvious thing: when I've had more money, I've done a few more takes, three or four is a luxury. I still work very tight.

You're a self-declared explorer of sexuality, but your movies aren't sexually graphic.

My concept of sensuality and eroticism is through suggestion and inference To me a shadow is always much more evocative and intriguing than anything explicit. It's a little bit what Marlene Dietrich said: 'Desire is everything, having is nothing.' It's the longing - the desire - not the nuts and bolts.

After your early period in Hollywood, you went to Paris, encouraged by Cocteau.

Yeah, I got a fan letter from Cocteau. He'd seen my film *Fireworks* at the Biarritz 'Festival du Film Maudit'. He was on the jury and I rather think he was responsible for the film being awarded a prize.

Did you speak French then?

I certainly did 'cos I majored in French at Beverly Hills High School. I've always been fascinated by French culture, and my grandmother encouraged me to study it. Then just imagine riding in a taxi up the Champs Elysees with all those names on the marquees - Cocteau, Piaf.

You must have felt quite adventurous - hopeful - setting off to Paris.

Oh yeah. I was looking forward... to jump into Europe. It was something! I arrived in spring, 1950. At that time, Cocteau's movies were playing - *Les Parents Terribles, Les Enfants Terribles.* It was a pretty exciting time. I got to meet Colette, Chanel, Piaf, Genet, Cocteau, Henri Langlois, all in one fell swoop.

Un Chant d'Amour *is often shown with or paralleled to* Fireworks.

I met Genet and he just shrugged his own movie off. The film was paid for by the owner of the Rose Rouge nightclub, Nico Papadakis, and so it had more production values. It was filmed on 35mm with a professional cameraman, so it certainly had a more slick look than my little film - but I think I did pretty good, with my hundred dollar budget.

What about Cocteau?

Of all his films, the one I felt a most direct relation to is *Le Sang du Poete.* I think it's a very impressive piece of work. He's certainly one of the artists I most admire, along with Noel Coward. They're both one-man bands, one-man shows and I always wanted to do that, to do it all myself. I've been that way since I was a kid. When I was very young, I had my own puppet-show. I worked all the puppets myself. You know, when there's six of seven

Le Sang d'un Poete

marionettes on stage, that's rather something. But I figured a way to do it all myself.

But Noel Coward - he was pretty establishment wasn't he?

No. No. No. When he started he was writing dirty plays about drugs and incest. Both Coward and Cocteau made avant-garde plays. Coward's play *The Vortex*, that was his shocker. He was something like twenty when he did that. He acted in it, playing the drug-addict. He wrote it and then he got into writing music. I've always wanted to do that. I love music. Wish I could write my own.

Your first film in Paris was Rabbit's Moon.

La Lune des Lapins came about through a series of fortuitous events. A Russian film company had a number of spools of 35mm stock left over from a documentary they were making. It was good fine-grain black and white. The idea of having 35mm to work with, even though it was only a few thousand feet, was terrific. The second thing was that Pierre Braunberger had a small studio behind the Pantheon. He offered it to me for the month of August. I almost finished it, but then he came back and said I had to vacate the place, so I had to tear down and get out. I only had two weeks there, but what I did manage to film, I eventually cut into *Rabbit's Moon*.

Rabbit's Moon is *a very directly emotional film.*

It's what I call a nocturne, a dream about me. It's about unrequited love and the moon is a symbol, as it has been in romantic literature (at least up to Apollo) of the unattainable. The moon has always been something that's longed for. I use the figures of Commedia: Pierrot, the lost

clown; Columbine, the flirt; and Harlequin, who's the devil, the trickster.

Your Harlequin is very spiteful.

So he is. The world, to Harlequin, is a comedy. To him, it's uproarious to trick - to trip people up. Harlequin is Lucifer. To look at it from Harlequin's standpoint - which may be the devil's point of view - he's having a good time. In other words, Harlequin has no complexes; his approach to the world is very direct. You can call him cruel, but he is also a survivor and Pierrot the sad sack is not.

It was six years between Fireworks *and the next finished film* Eaux d'Artifice. *That must have been discouraging.*

It was very discouraging. I was having my alchemical experiments blow-up, rather than produce the mythic gold. So, when I went to Italy and was able to make *Eaux d'Artifice*, it was gratifying to be able to finish the film as I had originally intended. *Eaux D'Artifice* is another nocturne - a film about myself searching in the moonlight - or looking for something to happen in the dark.

After that, you made Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome *here, in California.*

Yes. I came back from Europe. My mother died and I made the film with all of the money she left me. I also had a terrific group of friends who helped me to make the film: the poetess Anais Nin, and the diarist Samson de Brier with his house full of all kinds of exotica.

You've featured some odd characters in that film: Osirus, Shiva Cagliostro...

Cagliostro was a magician, a character who was possibly a fake and possibly the real thing, and that always intrigues me.

And there's the mystic painter Cameron...

She was the widow of my friend Jack Parsons who had died while I was away in Europe. His house was blown-up in a mysterious accident that may have been an alchemical accident or a murder plot by Howard Hughes... but Jack knew how to handle explosives, because he invented the jet fuel that took the rocket to the moon - so its unlikely he'd drop a bottle of nitroglycerine.

Your work, your concerns , are very engaged with Crowley. Why no film about 'the Beast'?

I have made one documentary, *Thelema Abbey* on Crowley's erotic frescos. That film was made for an extinct British magazine *Picture Post*,TV Omnibus. and they lost it. It's untraceable. I'd dearly like to film some of Crowley's rituals, possibly some episodes from his life which were lurid and over the top and would lend themselves to film and have comedy and tragedy and roisterous adventure. I certainly know my subject - well as anyone ever can. Though I never met the wickedest man in the world as Beaverbrook labeled him.

You'd spent over ten year s in France. When you came back to live in New York you must have felt like a stranger.

It's always been strange to me there anyway. Brooklyn was as strange to me as any foreign country. I was invited to stay with friends in Brooklyn, by another film-maker, Marie Menken. When I was there I went out to Coney Island and met this group of bikers, who had built themselves showbikes, very flamboyant machines - dozens of headlights, chrome fins and things, basically made to show off. That was the origin of *Scorpio Rising.*

Scorpio's the sign that governs death and sexuality...

....and machines. So there is a direct connection with motocycles, weapons, the mechanical aspect of things.

That teen-dream, the rebel-biker mythos, it's been imitated a lot.

Yes, I was the first one to use pop music. Sometimes I'm called the godfather of MTV (laughs). I made my music track out of songs of that summer, songs that were just around. It sort of identified that summer. I didn't steal them, I paid the rights: fifteen thousand dollars - cost a lot more now. I think I was the first to use pop music as ironic commentary on the image, in the way that I did.

Was Scorpio Rising *in some sense a commercial venture on your part?*

No, it was just the subject. No, it's one of my films that's had more recognition, but it's a 'short'. It got some publicity - praise and prizes - it was banned in Los Angeles and it was a landmark case when the Californian Supreme Court said it could be shown...it had 'redeeming merit.'

Then you went straight on to begin Kustom Kar Kommandos, *working with a very new colour range.*

Oh, yeah. In that respect, it was to be completely different from *Scorpio Rising*.. It was to be, for one thing, very Californian, lots of bright pastels. *Scorpio Rising* was more like the flames in the night, darkness, mystery. This was to be far more optimistic. But the protagonist, who was to be a little bit the equivalent of the main character in *Scorpio Rising* (in other words, I would follow through one character), unfortunately he was killed in a drag-race and I

allowed this to discourage me from continuing.

Invocation of My Demon Brother *came next. The demon brother/lover, that's something I associate with you. Can you tell me something about what this means?*

It's the eidolon, or the secret double who is possibly a demon and possibly an angel. It's either your better self or your worse self, or the part of you that's needed to become complete. In my own life, it goes back to my childhood, where I had an invisible playmate who may or may not have had more reality than imagination. It was real for me. His name was Jackie, so the demon brother does appear.

You articulate yourself as Magus - that's how you show yourself. It's very magical to watch, but it's serious; it's an important feature isn't it?

I have studied ritual magic. It's my avocation. It's actually more than study. I would like to be a Magus. In a film, there can be a certain amount of will-fulfilment, seriously, the magus should perform alone, not surrounded by technicians, lights and a camera. I made myself the robe of the magus and I drew the magic circle and I perform an invocation. However, in some alarming ways, it became true. In some ways, it was like playing at something and having it become very real. When I met Bobby Beausoleil, he fulfilled, in many ways, the role of this demon in real life. Suddenly I was confronted with the very flesh and blood - a handsome Devil.

So Invocation of My Demon Brother *is orginal* Lucifer Rising *footage?*

It's all I had left after Bobby stole all he could find... well, he overlooked some unspooled scraps in the cutting-bin, and from these, I constructed *Invocation of My Demon Brother.*

It's got footage of Vietnam..

When I put the film together, Vietnam was very much on my mind. It was happening. The helicopters and the troops jumping out - that was an image I wanted in the film as an underlying background of violence and chaos.

I don't associate you with being politically engaged...

You may not, but there are certain things. Certainly I was opposed to the Vietnam war - vainglorious, foolish and tragic. There are causes that I am very much concerned with, like the environment, and I'm not too fond of nuclear power. That's an example of arrogance: power that produces garbage that's lethal for thousands of years.

A lot of focus is put on that period as a time of personal and public crisis in your career. What about the obituary you took out in 'Village Voice'?

It looked like an obituary, but to anyone that know me...it wasn't, because the dates on it corresponded with my years of film-making. I was upset to have my feature-film stolen. I preferred to ... I needed to publicly exorcise it, otherwise it would have eaten away at me. I got it out of my system in that way.

After that, you spent some time in England.

Yes, England was a refuge for me in the late 60's and early 70's, and I did the cutting for *Invocation of My Demon Brother.* I also cut *Rabbit's Moon* which had been misplaced by the Cinematheque Francaise, lost for twenty years - and they refound it at that time. So I was happy to dig into that and do a bit of personal archaeology. In England, I found backing from the National Film Finance Corporation and

I began to film *Lucifer Rising* again, but this time with a completely different take on it.

It seems to me a very different kind of film. It looks radically different.

I hope so. I want every film to be an exploration into new territory. I came to the realization that there's things that I love about the world that I hadn't yet got up on the screen and I'd better start doing that, so there's more nature - aspects of nature - in *Lucifer Rising* than have appeared in my films before - like there's sunrises and volcanoes and seascapes and wild animals - things I love - ruins - things I love.

You've described yourself, at various times, as mean and gloomy.

I'll admit to a certain amount of cosmic melancholy. I am a manic-depressive, though that's a self-diagnosis. I also have elation, good feelings, good times.

Is Lucifer Rising *an optimistic movie?*

It is. Look, my own take on Lucifer is that he is the god of light and colour - his name: Bringer of light - Lucem fero, the carrier of the torch. I don't see him as the devil at all. This is my personal take that come from gnosticism - and Crowley.

So your Lucifer, he's nothing to do with Satan?

No. It's not anything to do with Satan, but I realize I'm dealing with a subject that many people find inflammatory: I hope so! I'm not making crowd pleasers. I think Lucifer is a beautiful name, a beautiful concept. But you know, for someone so important - the cosmic villain - there's not much text devoted to him. I've read as much as I could. I've researched my subject. I like the texts where he calls himself 'Mas belo que Dios' - more beautiful than God! And of course that arrogance and hubris condemned him to being kicked out of heaven. The Christians have painted themselves into a corner, because the truly profound religions, like Hinduism, accept the fact that there are gods and godesses and that they are very sacred but they must also be destructive and that this is the balance of nature: hurricanes, earthquakes, as well as flowers blooming and crops ripening.

So, Lucifer can be seen as a healthy spirit?

I call him bright Lucifer. All the colours. All the play of light. As an artist, it's just my own take. I see him like Milton saw Satan. In fact, it was Milton who created Satan. He didn't have much to go on from the Bible, but he created this magnificent text...the fallen angel...his vision...the vision of a blind man.

What's Kenneth Anger's vision of evil?

(Laughs) I once defined evil as motion pictures and I'm not ready to take that back. I think evil is something which is attractive, and compelling, a seduction into the unreal which is glamourous and ultimately unsatisfactory. I think all those things can be said about movies. I still love movies.

Thanks to Kenneth Anger for his time, patience, and hospitality during the making of this interview.

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KENNETH ANGER : A FILMOGRAPHY

Unless otherwise noted, the films were conceived, directed and edited by Kenneth Anger. We have also included films in which Anger has appeared as an actor or which he figures as subject.
Those films marked with an asterisk are are all in distribution in Britain with the British Film Institute. This filmography is based on Robert A. Haller's in his *Kenneth Anger: A Monograph*, Mystic Fire Video, New York, 1980, with some additions provided by Rebekah Ward, based on her conversations with Anger.

BABY BURLESQUES
1934 (director unknown) Educational Films, Poverty Row Studios, Hollywood. Baby exploitation at its tackiest. Featuring caricatures of contemporary politicians and figures from Hollywood.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
1935, by Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle.
Anger played the Changeling prince.

FIREWORKS*
1947, 14 minutes, tinted b/w, sound
Camera assistant: Chester Kessler, Music by Respighi
Filmed in Hollywood. Cast: Kenneth Anger (Dreamer) Gordon Gray (First Sailor). Bill Seltzer (Second Sailor)
Festival Prizes: Brussels, Cannes, Biarritz and Paris.
In Fireworks *I released all the explosive pyrotechnics of a dream. Inflammable desires dampened by day under the cold water of consciousness are ignited that night by the libertarian matches of sleep, and burst forth in showers of shimmering incandescence. These imaginary displays provide a temporary relief.*
- Kenneth Anger.

PUCE MOMENT*
1949, 6 minutes, color, sound.
Music by Jonathan Halper. Filmed in Hollywood. Cast: Yvonne Marquis (Star).
A fragment of the never-completed Puce Women.
Puce Moment *takes on a spicier meaning when 'I'm a Hermit' and 'Leaving My Old Life Behind' on the track are combined with the visuals of shimmering antique dresses and languishing Hollywood star. The obvious suggestion here is a renunciation of drag-dressing, an escape from the fetishization of costume and a climb 'out of the closet'.*
- Carel Rowe.

RABBIT'S MOON (LA LUNE DES LAPINS).*
1950, 7 minutes, tinted b/w, sound
Camera assistant: Tourjansky . Filmed in Paris. Cast: Andre Soubeyran (Pierrot), Claude Revenant (Harlequin), Nadine Valence (Columbine).
Not released until 1972, then in a 16 minutes version with a pop soundtrack. In 1979 the shorter 7 minute version with a soundtrack by Andy Arthur replaced the 1973 version.
Rabbit's Moon *clearly centers on one aspect of Anger's filmmaking, an aspect which is less obvious in his other films - the use of human motion as a means by which the intense inner life of his characters is externalized. The film is a testament to Anger's awareness that, in film, states which go beyond words - the unutterable and the unbearable - can be specifically communicated through human motion.*
-Amy Greenfield.

EAUX D'ARTIFICE*
1953 13 minutes, color
Camera assistant: Thad Lovett, Music by Vivaldi. Filmed in the gardens of the Villa D'Este, Tivoli (Italy). Cast: Marmilla Salvatorelli (Lady).
In Eaux D'Artifice *we see a baroque maze of staircases, fountains, gargoyles and balustrades. A figure in eighteenth century costume, flowing dress, and high headpiece hurries through this*

environment while the camera zooms into and away from the mask-like faces ,water spirits carved in stone ,or studies in slow motion the fall of fountains and sprays, then turns into a fountain, and her silhouetted form dissolves into an identical fountain arrangement.

- P. Adams Sitney.

*INAUGURATION OF THE PLEASURE DOME**
1954, 38 minutes, color, sound
Camera assistant: Robert Straede. 'Sacred Mushroom Edition' has music by Janacek (Glagolithic Mass) Filmed in Hollywood. Cast: Samson DeBrier (Lord Shiva, Osiris, The Great Beast), Camerson (The Scarlet Woman, Kali), Katy Kadell (Isis), Renata Loome (Lilith), Anais Nin (Astarte), Paul Mathison (Pan), Curtis Harrington (Cesare the Somnambulist), Kenneth Anger (Hecate), Peter Loome (Ganymede).
Other versions had music by Harry Partch (41 minutes 1954-56), and the Electric Light Orchestra (38 minutes 1978). A 41 minute 1958 version was presented at Brussels on three screens.
Festival Prize: L'Age d'or Award, Brussels International Experimental Film Festival.

Dedicated to the few; and to Aleister Crowley; and the crowned and conquering child. *- Kenneth Anger*

The film is derived from one of Crowley's dramatic rituals where people in the cult assume the identity of a god or a goddess. In other words, it's the equivalent of a masquerade party - they plan this for a whole year and on All Sabbaths Eve they come as the gods and goddesses that they have identified with, and the whole thing is like an improvised happening.
This is the actual thing the film is based on. In which the gods and goddesses interact and in The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome *it's the legend of Bacchus that's the pivotal thing and it ends with the god being torn to pieces by the Bacchates. This is the underlying thing. But rather than using a specific ritual, which would entail quite a lot of the spoken word as ritual does, I wanted to create a feeling of being carried into a world of wonder. And the use of color and phantasy is progressive; in other words, it expands, it becomes completely subjective - like when people take communion, and one sees it through their eyes.*

- Kenneth Anger.

THE DEAD
1960, 11 minutes, silent
Directed by Stan Brakhage, filmed in Paris in the Pere Lachaise Cemetary. Brakhage used Anger to represent his own feelings of depression and frustration.

ARABESQUE FOR KENNETH ANGER
Directed by Marie Menken, 1961, 4 minutes, sound
Although Anger does not appear in the work, physically, he is present as an idea, as well as the subject of the film's dedication.

*SCORPIO RISING**
1963 29 minutes, color, sound
Camera: Kenneth Anger. Music by Little Peggy March, The Angels, Bobby Vinton, Elvis Presley, Ray Charles, The Crystals, The Ran-Dells, Kris Jensen, Claudine Clark, Gene McDaniels, The Surfaris. Filmed in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Cast: Bruce Byron (Scorpio). Johnny Sapienza (Taurus), Frank Carifi (Leo). John Palone (Pinstripe). Ernie Allo (Joker), Barry Rubin (Fall Guy), Steve Crandell (Blondie), Bill Dorfmann (Back) Johnny Dodds (Kid).
Festival Awards: First Prize, Evian, France, 1966 Golden Cup, 11th Festival of Rapallo, Italy, 1965, First Prize, Third Annual Independent Film-Makers' Festival, Foothill College, CA. First Prize, Documentary, Poretta Terme Festival of Free Cinema, Italy, 1964

Dedicated to Jack Parsons, Victor Childe , Jim Powers,James Dean, T.E. Lawrence, Hart Crane, Kurt Mann,The Society of Spartans, The Hell's Angels, and all overgrown boys who will everyone of them follow the whistle of Love's brother.

- Kenneth Anger.

Kenneth Anger's emblematic film called Scorpio Rising *(of course , a phallic metaphor) shows the intimate connection among Hell's Angelism, idolatrous sex, childish violence, and fascism. While some of the realistic space of* Scorpio Rising *is the open road, and we do indeed see militaristic Leather Boys speeding along, the symbolic space is a Leather Boy's bedroom den where he 'moons' amid the fetishes adorning his walls and reads comic books. The step from there to the open road is also symbolic in that, according to Anger, it involves a death wish - final release into infinite space. When, toward the end of* Scorpio Rising, *we see a group leader haranguing on a rostrum, we have an image of Hitlerian hysteria, urging youth on to sacrifice itself in death. Sexuality per se has been concretely transmuted and superseded. Death, not Sex, rides the motorcycle.*

- Parker Tyler.

.... surely the most widely seen film in the history of the American avant-garde. WIth it's self-conscious media quotaitons, mock-heroic view of urban youth culture, knowing homoeroticism , and smashing use of rock'n'roll, Scorpio Rising *burst dramatically on the American scene. If its acceptance was not completely universal -the Los Angeles Police Department confiscated the print during its initial midnight run, and Anger was sued by the American Nazi party for 'desecrating' the swastika - no other underground movie has ever had a comparable effect on Hollywood producition.* The Wild Angels, Midnight Cowboy, Easy Rider, Mean Streets, and American Graffiti *can all be seen as part of its ripple effect.*

Not the least important aspect of the film was Anger's dense, almost subliminal editing style. It's a truism that television commercials are heir to theories of Sergei Eisenstein, but I'd venture that Madison Avenue learned more about the power of associative montage from Scorpio Rising *than* The Battleship Potemkin. *Although the rise of structuralism severely mitigated Anger's influence within the avant-garde of the early seventies,* Scorpio Rising *has the same relationship to the recent super-8 punk films as Gogol's* Overcoat *was said to have had on modern literature. Filmmakers Eric Mitchell, Beth and Scott B, and Vivienne Dick have, all in their own ways, come out of Anger's leather jacket.*

- Jim Hoberman, American Film, March 1981.

I well remember the first time I saw a Kenneth Anger film. It was about 1964 at Vernon Simmerman's loft downtown and Jonas Mekas showed us Scorpio Rising, *after it was banned.*
Of all his films, it is still the one I like the most. I was impressed by his ironic use of pop music and by his sense of rhythm. I was also fascinated by his ambiguous relationship to Hollywood, his love/hate continuously expressed through the use and abuse of Hollywood imagery, in a romantic, decadent mood.
There is a pagan religiosity in his films. His continuous reference to myth and to ritual creates a hypnotising, a dream atmosphere that seems to put the viewer in a state of trance. Kenneth Anger is a unique filmmaker, an artist of exceptional imagination.

- Martin Scorsese, 1989.

KUSTOM KAR KOMMANDOS*
1965, 3 minutes, color, sound
Camera assistant: Arnold Baskin, Music by the Parris Sister, Filmed in San Bernadino. Cast: Sandy Trent (Car Customiser). A fragment of a larger, never completed project
Kustom *is an oneiric vision of a contemporary American (and specifically Californian) teenage phenomenon, the world of the hot-rod and customized car. I emphasized the word oneiric, as* Kustom *will not be a 'documentary' covering the mechanical hopping-up and esthetic costomizing of cars, but rather a dream-like probe into the psyche of the teenager for whom the unique aspect of the power-potentialized customized car represents a poetic extension of personality, an accessible means of wish-fulfillment.*

-Kenneth Anger.

LUCIFER RISING
1966 Central footage of this first version stolen.

*INVOCATION OF MY DEMON BROTHER**
(ARRANGEMENT IN BLACK AND GOLD).
1969, 11 minutes, color, sound
Camera: Kenneth Anger. Music by Mick Jagger (Moog synthesizer). Filmed in San Francisco at the Straight Theatre and the Russian Embasssy. Cast: Speed Hacker (Wand-bearer). Lenore Kandel (Deaconess). William Beutel (Deacon), Kenneth Anger (Magus), Van Leuven (Acolyte). Harvey Bialy (Brother), Timotha (Sister), Anton Szandor LaVey (Satan), Bobby Beausoleil (Lucifer). Made from the remains of the 1966 *Lucifer Rising* project.
Awards : Tenth Independent Film Award (for the year 1969) by Film Culture.
For Anger the aesthetic endeavour is a category of magick. His image of the self is particularly complex because it involves as many distinctions as there are grades for the magician. Like Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome, *the vision of the self in* Invocation *has its foundation in the Romantic idea of the unitary man whose one character is made up of different individuals in opposition. But the magician of* Invocation *is of a higher order than Shiva of* Inauguration, *and the range of the film is both wider and more diffuse.*

- P. Adams Sitney.

HENRI LANGLOIS
1970 Directed by Hershon/Guerra. Details unknown.

LOOK BACK AT ANGER
1974 Directed by Leo Vale. Produced by Robert Haller. 12 minutes.
Both Anger and Haller dislike this film portrait. The film has Anger speaking about his own work intercut with stills from old movies and extracts from his films. Anger's discussion of the influence of the colour schemes from Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot deck on *Scorpio Rising* is, however, of particular interest.

*LUCIFER RISING.**
1970-1980, 30 minutes, color, sound.
A presentation of Anita Pallenberg. Camera assistant: Michael Cooper. Music by Bobby Beausoleil and the Freedom Orchestra (Tracy Prison). Thelemic consultant: Gerald J Yorke. Filmed in Luxor, Karnak, Gizeh, Externsteine, London, Avebury. Cast: Miriam Gibril (Isis) Donald Cammell (Osiris), Haydn Couts (Adept), Kenneth Anger (Magus), Sir Francis Rose (Chaos), Marianne Faithfull (Lilith), Leslie Huggins (Lucifer). An earlier version carries a soundtrack by Jimmy Page.
Lucifer Rising *burns on a slower fuse than his earlier work: it strikes a balance between Eisensteinian montage (the relation of one image to another) and an interest in the 'spiritual' essence of individual images. The film provides its own metaphor for this balance in one of the introductory shots: a stream of molten lava crosses the land in the foreground, while the placid ocean stretches away in to the distance in the upper part of the frame. Fire and water imagery are similarly counterpointed throughout, as if* Fireworks *and* Eaux d'Artifice *had been brought together into mysterious union.*

-Tony Rayns.